

REMARKS

Prior to entry of this amendment, claims 1-13 and 15-17 were pending in this application. Applicants have amended claims 1-13, 15, and 17. Applicants have also canceled claim 16 and added new claims 18-19. Thus, claims 1-13, 15, and 17-19 are now pending. No new matter is added.

In the Office Action mailed March 28, 2008, pending claims 1, 4, 12-13, and 15 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

- (A) Claims 1, 4, 12-13, and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over U.S. Patent 6,643,763 ("Starke") in view of U.S. Patent 6,990,556 ("Check"); and
- (B) Claims 2-3, 5-11, and 16-17 were objected to as depending upon a rejected base claim and were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their respective base and intervening claims.

A. Response to the Section 103 rejection of claims 1, 4, 12-13, and 15

Without conceding to, or commenting on, the merits of the Section 103 rejection, Applicants respectfully submit that the Section 103 rejection is moot in light of the above amendments. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of these claims in unamended or other form in a continuation or other application.

B. Response to the objection to claims 2-3, 5-11, and 16-17

Applicants thank Examiner Phan for indicating that claims 2-3, 5-11, and 16-17 were directed to allowable subject matter.

Independent claim 1 is amended to include features based on the subject matter of objected to dependent claims 2-3. Independent claim 4 is amended to include features based on the subject matter of objected to dependent claims 5, 8-9, and 11. Independent claim 12 is amended to include features that are substantially similar to the features previously recited by objected to dependent claim 16. Claim 16 is canceled.

In addition, claim 1-13, 15, and 17 include various other amendments to correct informalities, preserve dependencies, and/or improve readability.

Claims 2-3 depend from independent claim 1, claims 5-11 depend from independent claim 4, and claims 13, 15, and 17 depend from independent claim 12.

Each of claims 1-13, 15, and 17 are respectfully submitted to be allowable for at least these reasons.

New claims 18-19

Claims 18-19 are new.

Claim 18 depends from independent claim 12 and is supported at least by the subject matter of independent claim 12 prior to entry of this amendment. Claim 19 depends from independent claim 1 and is supported at least by the subject matter of independent claim 1 prior to entry of this amendment.

For at least these reasons, applicants respectfully submit that new claims 18-19 and are allowable and do not constitute new matter.

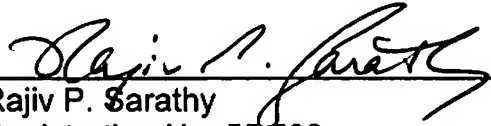
Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the pending claims comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and are patentable over the applied art. The applicants accordingly request reconsideration of the application and a mailing of a Notice of Allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite

prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Rajiv P. Sarathy at (206) 359-6478.

Respectfully submitted,
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